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IN THE
Supreme Court of the United States

OCTOBER TERM, 1942

No. 799

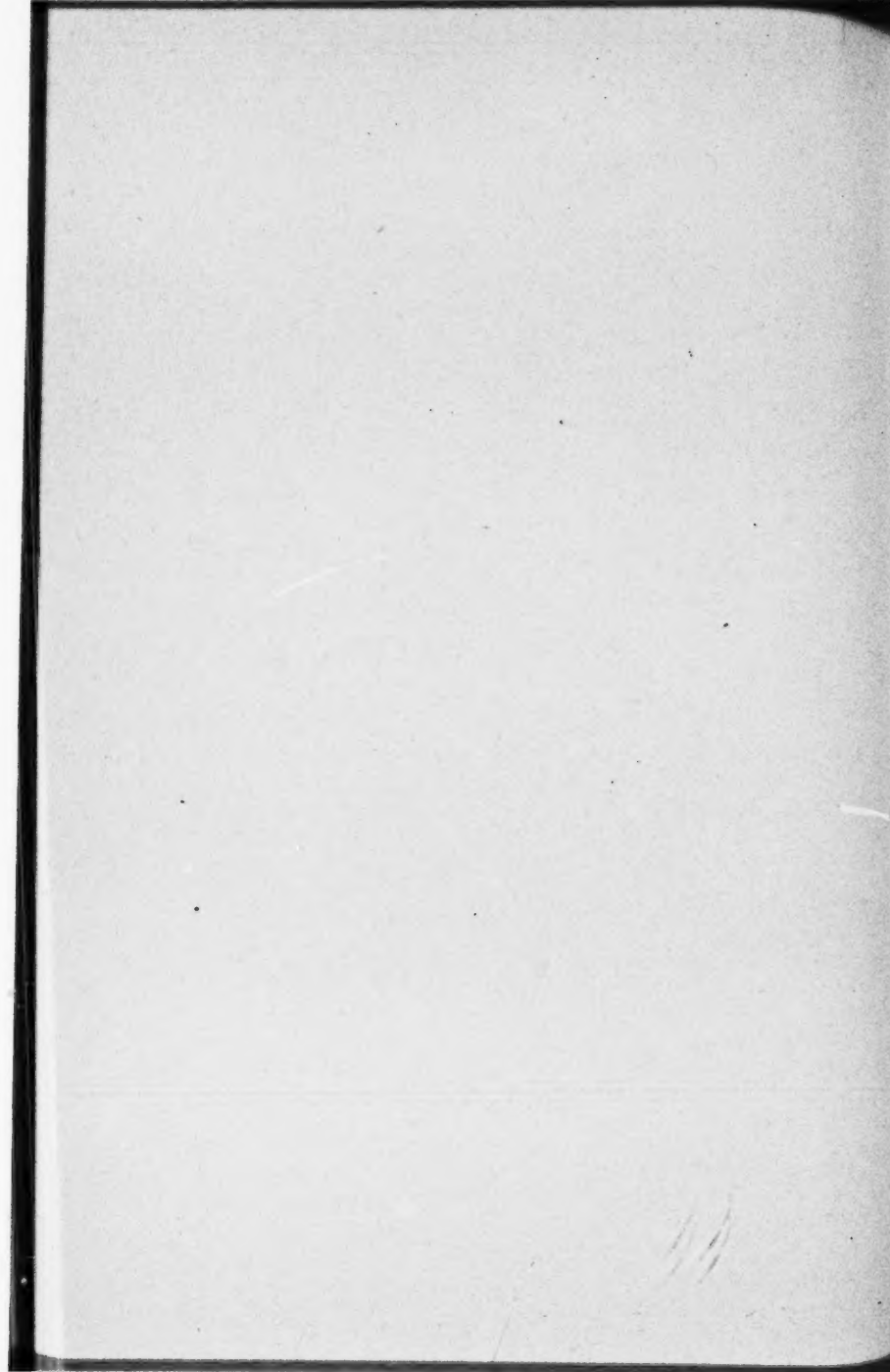
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER COMPANY, *Petitioner,*

v.

CONWAY P. COE, Commissioner of Patents, *Respondent.*

**PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND BRIEF IN SUP-
PORT THEREOF.**

CHARLES K. DAVIES, JR.,
FRANK E. SCRIVENER,
Attorneys for petitioner.



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*To the Honorable, the Chief Justice, and the Associate Jus-
tices of the Supreme Court of the United States:*

The petitioner, appellant below, prays the issuance of a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia entered in the above-entitled cause on the eighth day of December, 1942 (R. 66), affirming the judgment of the District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia for respondent, appellee below.

OPINIONS BELOW.

The District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia rendered an opinion dismissing petitioner's complaint (R. 26 et seq.). The majority opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia sustaining the judgment of the District Court appears at page 55 of the Record, and the dissenting opinion of Associate Justice Stephens at page 60 of the Record.

JURISDICTION.

The judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia was entered on the eighth day of December, 1942 (R. 66).

The jurisdiction of this court is invoked under Section 239 of the Judicial Code, as amended by the Act of February 13, 1925, 28 U. S. C. A. section 347.

FEDERAL STATUTES INVOLVED.

R. S. 4915—35 U. S. C. A. 63:

“Whenever a patent on application is refused by the Commissioner of Patents, the applicant, unless appeal has been taken from the decision of the Board of Appeals to the United States Court of Customs and Patent Appeals, and such appeal is pending or has been decided, in which case no action may be brought under this section, may have remedy by bill in equity, if filed within six months after such refusal; and the court having cognizance thereof, on notice to adverse parties and other due proceedings had, may adjudge that such applicant is entitled, according to law, to receive a patent for his invention, as specified in his claim, or for any part thereof as the facts in the case may appear. And such adjudication if it be in favor of the right of the applicant shall authorize the Commissioner to issue such patent on the applicant filing in the Patent Office a copy of the adjudication and otherwise complying with the requirements of law. In all cases where

there is no opposing party a copy of the bill shall be served on the Commissioner; and all of the expenses of the proceedings shall be paid by the applicant, whether the final decision is in his favor or not. In all suits brought hereunder where there are adverse parties the record in the Patent Office shall be admitted in whole or in part, on motion of either party, subject to such terms and conditions as to costs, expenses, and the further cross-examination of the witnesses as the court may impose, without prejudice, however to the right of the parties to take further testimony. The testimony, and exhibits, or parts thereof of the record in the Patent Office when admitted shall have the same force and effect as if originally taken and produced in the suit." (As amended March 2, 1927 c. 273 Sec. 11; 44 Stat. 1336—March 2, 1929, c. 488—Sec. 2(b), 45 Stat. 1476.)

Act of Congress 1905—Sec. 5, 15 U. S. C. A. 85:

"That no mark by which the goods of the owner of the mark may be distinguished from other goods of the same class shall be refused registration as a trademark on account of the nature of such mark unless such mark—"

(a) Consists of or comprises immoral or scandalous matter.

(b) Consists of or comprises the flag or coat of arms or other insignia of the United States or any simulation thereof, or of any State or municipality or of any foreign nation, or of any design or picture that has been or hereafter may be adopted by any fraternal society as its emblem, or of any name, distinguishing mark, character, emblem, colors, flag, or banner adopted by any institution, organization, club or society which was incorporated in any State in the United States prior to the date of the adoption and use by the applicant: Provided That said name, distinguishing mark, character, emblem, colors, flag or banner was adopted and publicly used by said institution, organization, club, or society prior to the date of adoption and use by the applicant:

“Provided, That trade-marks which are identical with a registered or known trade-mark owned and in use by another and appropriated to merchandise of the same descriptive properties, or which so nearly resemble a registered or known trade-mark owned and in use by another and appropriated to merchandise of the same descriptive properties as to be likely to cause confusion or mistake in the mind of the public or to deceive purchasers shall not be registered: * * *.”

QUESTIONS PRESENTED.

The issues raised by this case are two in number, both having to do with the interpretation of the Act of Congress of February 20, 1905 (15 U. S. C. A. 85):

(1) What is the meaning of the term “merchandise of the same descriptive properties” as it is used in the proviso to section 5 of the Act of Congress of February 20, 1905 (now with amendments codified in 15 U. S. C. A. Sec. 85), the controlling statute on the right to registration of trade-marks?

(2) What factors properly must be considered in a determination of whether two articles of merchandise are or are not, within the meaning of the statute, “of the same descriptive properties”?

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT.

A writ of certiorari should be granted under paragraph 5 of Rule 38 of this court, for the following reasons:

(1) The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which, within the purport of the first clause of paragraph 5 (b) of Rule 38 of this court, stands in the same position as a circuit court of appeals, has rendered a decision in the instant matter which is in conflict not only with the decisions of other circuit courts of appeals on the same matter, but which also conflicts with its own prior decisions on the same matter.

(2) A determination of the issues raised in the instant case involves, and depends entirely (R. 55—second paragraph of majority opinion) upon the construction of a statute of the United States, namely: section 5 of the Act of Congress of February 20, 1905 (op. cit.).

(3) The particular section of the Act of February 20, 1905 with which this case is concerned denies registration to two classes of trade-marks: (1) those “identical with a registered or known trade-mark owned and in use by another and appropriated to merchandise of the same descriptive properties”, and (2) those “which so nearly resemble a registered or known trade-mark owned and in use by another and appropriated to merchandise of the same descriptive properties as to be likely to cause confusion or mistake in the mind of the public or to deceive purchasers”. The all-important inquiry in each case involving identical or similar trade-marks is whether such marks are applied to “merchandise of the same descriptive properties”. There is urgent need of an authoritative judicial determination of the meaning of the phrase, “merchandise of the same descriptive properties” as it is used in the statute; and of judicial establishment of a test to be applied in order to determine whether, in a given case, two articles are merchandise of the same descriptive properties. The question has not been, but should be settled by this court.

(4) Since virtually every commodity produced and marketed in the United States is a present or potential subject for the application of a trade-mark, an authoritative interpretation by this court of the instantly involved portion of the Act of Congress regulating the registration of trade-marks is of extreme importance to American industry.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE.

Petitioner filed an application for registration of its trade-mark EVERYBODY'S WEEKLY for a WEEKLY NEWSPAPER SECTION in the United States Patent Office on May 10, 1937. (R. 7.) The application was pub-

lished December 28, 1937 (R. 10) and an opposition was filed by King Features Syndicate. (R. 12.) Testimony was taken by Opposer during the course of which a copy of a British magazine entitled EVERYBODY'S was introduced into evidence. (R. 52-53.) The British magazine was in use in the United States prior to Petitioner's first date of use.

Upon hearing in the Patent Office, the opposition was dismissed, but in view of the exhibit in the record, petitioners application for registration was denied ex parte. (R. 12-13.) Petitioner then appealed to the Commissioner of Patents (R. 14) and the Commissioner affirmed the decision on the opposition holding that, even though the likelihood of confusion was slight, pursuant to the provisions of the Act of February 20, 1905, the two trade-marks are identical, and the publications on which such trade-marks appear are merchandise of the same descriptive properties. (R. 15.)

Petitioner then filed its complaint (R. 2) in the District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia.

At the trial in the District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia, petitioner introduced the testimony of two trade witnesses (R. 39-49) to the effect (1) that the two publications differed in content, format, manner of distribution, field of distribution and class of purchasers; and (2) that in the opinions of the witnesses there could be no possibility that concurrent use of the trade-marks on the two publications might cause prospective purchasers or the public to confuse one publication with the other. The trial court, however, (R. 26 et seq.) refused to consider the expert testimony, but concluded, upon the basis of a mere inspection of the two publications, that such publications are, within the purview of the applicable statute, "merchandise of the same descriptive properties," and that petitioner's trade-mark, therefore, should be denied registration.

Petitioner then appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia (R. 35), which sus-

tained the result of and concurred in the reasoning of the opinion of the trial court. (R. 55-60.)

The dissenting opinion of Associate Justice Stephens of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia (R. 60-65) condemns the reasoning of the majority opinion to the effect that a determination whether two given items are, within the meaning of the statutory language, "merchandise of the same descriptive properties," properly may be made by mere sensory inspection of the items by the tribunal. It is the conclusion of the dissent that the trial court should have considered, and should have given greatest weight to the testimony of expert trade witnesses as to the likelihood of confusion between petitioner's newspaper section and the British magazine, on the theory that "likelihood of confusion and what the trade thinks with respect thereto is the critical consideration for determining whether or not the descriptive properties of items of merchandise are the same." (R. 65.)

SPECIFICATION OF ERRORS.

(1) The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia erred in affirming the judgment of the District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia dismissing petitioner's complaint.

(2) The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia erred in holding that the test of confusion, as established in the Act of February 20, 1905, is related to the similarity of trade-marks, and not to the determination of the descriptive properties of the merchandise to which such trade-marks are applied.

(3) The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia erred in holding that a determination of whether two articles of merchandise are, within the meaning of the phrase as used in the applicable Federal statute, merchandise of the same descriptive properties, may properly be made by consideration only of the intrinsic proper-

ties of the articles as disclosed by inspection, without any consideration of extrinsic evidence adduced to show the absence of any possibility of confusion occurring by reason of the application of identical or similar trade-marks to such two articles of merchandise.

(4) The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia erred in not holding that the definitive test to be applied in a judicial determination as to the identity of the descriptive properties of any two given articles of merchandise, for the purpose of deciding upon the registrability of a trade-mark under the Act of Congress of February 20, 1905, should be the test of likelihood of confusion.

ARGUMENT.

The registration of trade-marks in the United States Patent Office is controlled by section 5 of the Act of Congress of February 20, 1905, now with amendments codified in 15 U. S. C. A. 85.

The section, after certain provisions not pertinent to the issues raised herein, provides that two classes of trade-marks shall be denied registration, i. e.: identical trade-marks applied to merchandise of the same descriptive properties; and trade-marks so nearly similar that their concurrent use on merchandise of the same descriptive properties would be likely to cause confusion in the minds of purchasers.

In the instant case, petitioner has conceded, from the beginning, that its trade-mark, **EVERBODY'S WEEKLY**, is, in legal contemplation, identical with the trade-mark, **EVERYBODY'S**. The sole issue, then, is as to the Congressional intent in the use of the phrase, "merchandise of the same descriptive properties": what is the meaning of the phrase as used in the controlling statute; and how shall it be determined, in a given situation, whether two articles are "merchandise of the same descriptive properties"?

I. Conflicting Judicial Interpretations of the Language of the Federal Statute.

The proviso to section 5 of the Act of February 20, 1905, has been the subject of prolific litigation, both in infringement suits and in proceedings (like the instant case) under R. S. 4915 (35 U. S. C. A. 63) to compel the registration of trade-marks.

It is to be noted, of course, that ex parte proceedings under R. S. 4915 are normally filed only in the District of Columbia for the reason that service of process can be had only in the District of Columbia unless the Commissioner of Patents chooses to accept service in another jurisdiction. Therefore cases of this character are seldom decided by the United States Circuit Courts of Appeals.

However, the point at issue in the instant case, i.e.: the interpretation of the proviso of Sec. 5, of the Act of 1905, has been specifically ruled upon by the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Judicial Circuit in the case of *Yale Electric Corp. v. Robertson*, 26 Fed. (2nd) 972, 1928 wherein the Court, speaking through Judge Learned Hand, held:

“There remains the question of registration, the goods not being of the ‘same descriptive properties’ in the colloquial sense. It would plainly be a fatuity to decree the registration of a mark whose use another could at once prevent. The act cannot mean that, being drafted with an eye to the common law in such matters. *American Steel Foundries v. Robertson*, 269 U. S. 372, 381, 46 S. Ct. 160 (70 L. Ed. 317). While we own that it does some violence to the language, it seems to us that the phrase should be taken as no more than a recognition that there may be enough disparity in character between the goods of the first and second users *as to insure against confusion. That will indeed depend much upon trade conditions, but these are always the heart of the matter in this subject.* It is quite true that in *Rosenberg v. Elliott* (C. C. A.) 7 F. (2d) 962, the court felt bound to find that caps and suits had the same descriptive properties, quite independently of the

confusion which had arisen. We cannot say that that is the case here, for the fact that flash-lights and locks are made of metal does not appear to us to give them the same descriptive properties, *except as the trade has so classed them. But we regard what the trade thinks as the critical consideration, and we think the statute meant to make it the test, despite the language used.* (Italics supplied) (26 F. (2d) at 974)

The decision of the Circuit Court for the Second Circuit and the decision in the instant case by the United States Court of Appeals are in absolute conflict. (Record Page 56, paragraphs 4 through 7.)

Other decisions of the Circuit Courts interpreting the phrase, "Merchandise of the same descriptive properties," include:

- Ph. Schneider Brewing Co. v. Century Distilling Co.*,
107 Fed. (2nd) 697, 10th Circuit.
- California Packing Corp. v. Tillman & Bendel, Inc.*,
40 Fed. (2nd) 108.
- B. F. Goodrich Rubber Co. v. Hockmeyer*, 40 Fed.
(2nd) 99 .

In all of these decisions, the various United States Circuit Courts of Appeals have decided that the question of the similarity of the goods, or, in other words, the question of whether the goods are of the same descriptive properties, can be determined only by a consideration of the extrinsic characteristics of the goods. This reasoning the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia alone denies.

It is further submitted that the decision of which Petitioner now seeks review, is contrary to the prior decisions of the same Court in similar matters.

The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia previously has held in many cases that the question of likelihood of confusion in trade between two commodities sold under the same trade-mark is related not to

the similarity of the marks but to the identity of the goods in the minds of the trade and the public.

American Tobacco Co. v. Gordon, 56 App. D. C. 81, 10 Fed. (2nd) 646.

App. of B. F. Goodrich Co., 52 App. D. C. 261, 285 Fed. 995.

Phoenix Paint and Varnish Co. v. John T. Lewis & Bros., 32 App. D. C. 285.

G & J Tire Co. v. GJG Motor Car Co., 39 App. D. C. 508.

In all of these previous decisions by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, the practice has been uniform in holding that the essential test of whether goods are of the same descriptive properties under the applicable section of the Act is:— Will the concurrent use of the mark on the goods cause confusion? If not, then the goods are *not* of the same descriptive properties.

The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in the instant case has departed from the practice laid down since 1913 by that Court and the Circuit Courts of Appeals of other circuits.

A comparative study of the cases cited above discloses that the courts have pursued two methods of applying the statutory language to particular instances: (1) the somewhat haphazard procedure of determining the identity or lack of identity of the descriptive properties of given articles of merchandise by subjecting such articles to examination by the tribunal; and (2) the more logical and orderly procedure of searching for, and attempting to establish, a "yard-stick" by which the statutory phraseology may be applied to any situation with which the court is confronted. An excellent example of the latter method is found in the opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in *California Packing Corporation v. Price-Booker Manufacturing Company* (52 App. D. C. 259 at page 261; 285 Federal 993 at page 995), which is quoted

with approval in the dissenting opinion of Mr. Justice Stephens in the instant case (R. 61).

Thus it will be seen that the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, in holding, in the instant case, that the trial court was justified in arbitrarily deciding, without recourse to the expert testimony as to the impossibility of confusion in trade, that the two publications here involved are, within the meaning of the Act of 1905, "merchandise of the same descriptive properties", is in conflict not only with the rulings of other circuit courts of appeals, but also is in direct conflict with its own prior decisions in the same matter.

II. Importance of Issues Raised.

The matter at issue is of importance to all trade-mark owners, and to all applicants for registration of their respective trade-marks in the United States Patent Office.

During the course of the prosecution of an application for registration of a trade-mark in the Patent Office, either through *inter partes* or *ex parte* proceedings, decisions are made on the question of the descriptive properties of allegedly similar items by administrative action of tribunals in the Patent Office, which tribunals are concededly versed in the matters brought before them, but which must make their decisions without benefit of trade testimony, for the reason that the Patent Office procedure makes no provision for the taking of such testimony.

The Federal Statutes give dissatisfied applicants the right under R. S. 4915, as interpreted by this Court in *American Steel Foundries v. Robertson* (269 U. S. 372), the right to have their cases adjudicated by a competent court having jurisdiction. Thus the ultimate right of every present and future applicant for registration of a trade-mark is affected by the question presented to this Court here.

III. Need for Authoritative Interpretation of the Statute by This Court.

The United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in its majority opinion has stated (R. 55), "the construction of the applicable statutory provisions is the whole of this case. . . ."

This court has in the past granted writs of certiorari to review decisions involving section 5 of the Act of 1905, but with particular reference to other portions of the section than that in issue here. (*American Steel Foundries v. Robertson, supra*; *Estate of Beckwith*, 252 U. S. 538.) In the *American Steel Foundries* case the court interpreted the "geographical" proviso to section 5.

The case law which has evolved from the varying judicial interpretations and applications of the proviso to section 5 of the Act is in a state of confusion as a result of the attempts of the various tribunals to seek and establish some definitive formula which may be applied to all situations necessitating a determination of the similarity of descriptive properties of given items of merchandise.

This court has never construed that section of the statute which is here at issue.

The Federal Trade-Mark Act of February 20, 1905 is the sole legislative pronouncement upon the registrability of trade-marks. Prior to the enactment of that statute, the law regulating the registration and use of trade-marks was a part of and stemmed from the broader law of unfair competition, "the general purpose of which", this court said in *American Steel Foundries v. Robertson, supra*, quoting *United Drug Company v. Rectanus Company* (248 U. S. 90), "is to prevent one person from passing off his goods or his business as the goods or business of another". In the Act of 1905 Congress made express the historical principles of the substantive law of trade-marks. It is expedient that the true legislative intent expressed by and through that Act be clarified and established by a decision of this court.

CONCLUSION.

Petitioner therefore prays that a writ of certiorari may issue, and, upon a review, the judgments of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and of the District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia may be reversed.

CHARLES K. DAVIES, JR.,
FRANK E. SCRIVENER,
Attorneys for petitioner.

